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FAA Announces Virginia Tech UAS Test Site Now Operational
Research in Virginia, New Jersey and Maryland to benefit technology development

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Aviation Administration today announced that the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University's unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) test site program is ready to conduct research vital to integrating UAS into the nation's airspace. The site is the last of six nationwide to be declared operational.

To mark the event, FAA Administrator Michael Huerta, Virginia governor Terry McAuliffe, along with other FAA and MAAP officials, viewed a demonstration of the Smart Road Flyer, a low cost, low risk multi-rotor UAS being developed to support research in vehicle and highway systems. During the flight, the Flyer filmed a simulated accident scene on the "smart road" full-scale test-bed highway managed by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute.

"We have undertaken the challenge of safely integrating a new and exciting technology into the busiest, most complex airspace in the world," said Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. "The six test sites are going to play a key role in helping us meet that challenge."

The FAA granted Virginia Tech seven Certificates of Waiver or Authorization (COAs) for two-years. Other UAS models in addition to the Smart Road Flyer include an eSPAARO, Aeryon Sky Ranger, MANTRA2, Sig Rascal, and two AVID EDF-8 micro UASs.

UAS operations will occur at test areas in Virginia, New Jersey and Maryland. Research in the three states will eventually include agricultural spray equipment testing, development of aeronautical procedures for integration of UAS flights in a towered airspace and developing training and operational procedures for aeronautical surveys of agriculture

"Having all six national test sites up and running will give us more and better data to help expand the safe use of unmanned aircraft into our airspace," said FAA Administrator Michael Huerta.

The FAA selected six congressionally-mandated test sites on December 30, 2013. The agency is working with the test sites to guide their research programs to help the FAA safely integrate UAS into the national airspace over the next several years.

Virginia Tech is a member of the Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership (MAAP) consisting of academia, government, industry, economic development agencies, and non-profit organizations throughout Virginia, New Jersey, and Maryland.

For more information go to http://www.faa.gov/uas/

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